(c) Yes, Sir

(d) and (e) The production of Durgapur Steel Plant has improved during current year 2000-01 (Upto Dec., 2000) with a growth of 5% in Hot Metal, 8% in Crude Steel and 9% in saleable steel over the same period last year. Capacity utilisation of Hot Metal has gone up above 99% from Dec., 2000 onwards. Continuous casting route has been introduced and capacity utilisation has also reached above 100%. The techno-economic parameters have also improved significantly.

Performance of Rourkela Steel Plant has shown significant improvement during the year 2000-01 (upto Dec., 2000). Techno-economic parameters have improved significantly. However, the production in Rourkela Steel Plant had to be regulated due to sluggish market conditions and one Blast furnace has been shut down since April, 1999.

After modernisation, the production in Bokaro Steel Plant has been continuously improving. Continuous casting route has been introduced and capacity utilisation has been more than 100% in Nov., 2000. Hot strip production during the year 2000-01 has shown a growth of 14% over the corresponding period last year. Techno-economic parameters have also improved significantly.

Export of Iron

1107. SHRI RAJNATH SINGH 'SURYA': Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether export of iron ore to Japan, South Korea and China has been allowed;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether it is a fact that steel industry in the country is in bad shape; and

(d) if so, whether there is any buy back facility from these countries of the finished steel at internationally competitive price?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI BRAJ KISHORE TRIPATHY): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Ministry of Commerce & Industry (Department of Commerce) has intimated that Japan and South Korea are traditionally major buyers of Indian iron ore for many years for which long-term agreements are entered upon every five years. In recent years, China

also emerged as a strong market for Indian iron ore.

(c) After a slow down in the rate of growth of the Steel Industry for the past few years due to sluggish demand in the steel consuming sectors, overall economic slowdown in the country, dumping of finished steel by CIS and other countries etc., the industry has now picked up the production of finished steel during 1999-2000 was 26.71 million tonnes with a growth rate of 12.13%. The rate of growth for the past 3 years is as below:

(in million tonnes)

Finished Steel	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000
Domestic Demand	22.63	23.54	25.02
Production	23.37	23.82	26.71
Growth Rate	2.8%	2%	12.13%

(d) Does not arise.

Approval of Turn Around Strategy For VSP

1108. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have issued necessary instructions to the concerned authorities for approval of the turn around strategy proposed for the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant with the following components;

(i) set off the accumulated losses;

(ii) approval of capacity expansion;

(iii) provision of Government guarantee for raising funds; and

(iv) extension of Government guarantee for working capital loan;

(b) if so, the details of the instructions so issued; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor and by when Government are expected to issue necessary instructions?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI BRAJ KISHORE TRIPATHY): (a) to (c) A detailed proposal consisting of dispensations from the Government like setting off of the accumulated losses, capacity expansion, providing Government Guarantee for raising funds and extension of Govt. Guarantee for working capital loan was considered by the Government but the proposal was found not viable. The Disinvestment